SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOUNDARIES REVISITED

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON
INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

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St. John's, Newfoundland
February, 1987

February 19, 1987

The Reverend Ian S. Wishart, President
INTEGRATED EDUCATION COUNCIL
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St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 1H3

Dear Reverend Wishart:

We are pleased to submit the Report of the Task Force on Integrated School District Boundaries.

As required by the Terms of Reference, we examined the boundaries of all the Integrated districts in the Province, but placed special emphasis on those having fewer than 200 students in beginning classes. There were eleven districts requiring special consideration. Before preparing this Report, we visited all these districts, except one, and met with school board members or board officials to discuss matters relating to district reorganization in their area.

Following the "Introduction," the Report contains a brief description of recent developments affecting district organization in the Province. It continues with a review of general approaches to school district reorganization, followed by a presentation of recommendations for further reorganization in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Report concludes with suggestions intended to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who assisted us in this exercise. We are especially grateful to the staff of the Integrated Education Council and to school boards and their officials for their co-operation and support.

We hope the Report will be helpful to the Integrated Education Council in its efforts to arrange the best district organization possible for the schools under its jurisdiction.

Yours truly,

C. Roebothan

CECIL ROEBOTHAN

P. J. Warren

PHILIP WARREN

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Part I of the Schedule to the Schools Act, 1969, divided the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador into twenty Integrated educational districts; another one was added sometime after the legislation was enacted. Apart from a few minor changes in their boundaries, these districts have remained virtually unchanged for seventeen years. During that period, no further consolidation or reorganization has taken place.

This does not mean that no thought has been given to the question of school district boundaries over the years. In 1972, a Committee was appointed to examine the matter in some depth. Its main purpose was to propose larger units of administration to be established and to make them "as co-terminous as possible" with Roman Catholic districts. The Integrated Education Council's records indicate that this Committee functioned for five or six years and submitted a number of reports, including specific recommendations. However, its major recommendations were never implemented, and the exercise did not result in any significant changes to school district boundaries.

In 1982, another Committee, representing the same groups, was appointed but with a much narrower mandate. This Committee was asked to consider the boundaries of three districts: Labrador East, Strait of Belle Isle, and Vinland. It concluded its study and submitted its report in September of that year, recommending that:

(a) An inter-denominational district be established for central and southern Labrador; and that

(b) Vinland and Strait of Belle Isle Districts be consolidated.

These proposals did not appear to be fully acceptable to the various denominational groups; neither did they win the support of the school boards involved. Consequently, no action was taken to implement them. The Committee continued its study with its mandate expanded to include the districts of Burgeo and Ramea. Three years later, in September, 1985, it reported that, because of factors such as declining enrolments and changing communication patterns, the whole Province, rather than certain sections of it, should be included in the study. The Committee recommended the appointment of a task force to undertake this assignment.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

In May, 1986, the Integrated Education Council appointed the two-person Task Force comprised of Mr. C. Roebothan (Chairperson) and Dr. P.J. Warren to carry out the proposed study. The Terms of Reference were stated as follows:

(1) To examine the boundaries of Integrated school boards with a special emphasis on those boards with either present enrolments of less than 2,000 students or with beginning classes of less than 200 students.

(2) To make recommendations with respect to future district boundaries.

(3) To begin its work on the west and southwest sections of the Province with the view perhaps of having at the time of the Interim Report, firm

recommendations with respect to the Ramea and Burgeo Boards.

PROCEDURES

The Task Force felt that its examination of district boundaries should not be undertaken without a basic theoretical framework. The study began, therefore, with an examination of the literature to determine what conclusions experts in the field of school district organization had reached concerning such matters as optimum size for school districts, alternatives to district consolidation, and criteria to be used in organizing school districts. Members also wanted to know what recent developments, if any, had occurred, particularly in the other jurisdictions of Canada similar to our own. The findings and conclusions arising from this review are summarized in Chapter III, entitled "Approaches to School District Reorganization."

In order to gather further background information, the Task Force examined all the relevant records in the Department of Education and the Integrated Education Council office. It reviewed the work already done by the Committees appointed in 1972 and 1982, as well as the written reaction to these reports and recommendations. It studied the district profiles already prepared by each Integrated school board in the Province. In its examination of the files of the Department of Education, it attempted to determine precisely what changes have been made to Integrated district boundaries since the consolidation of school boards in 1969.

The Task Force concluded that it should discuss the consolidation issue with the boards concerned and consider their views before making any recommendations affecting their boundaries. Accordingly, with one exception, it visited districts singled out for special consideration under the Terms of Reference. In

these districts, discussions were held with central office staff and, in a number of instances, with teacher representatives. Generally, each visit concluded with a meeting of the school board or its executive. Invariably, discussions at these meetings focused on enrolment projections, the advantages and disadvantages of further consolidation, and the options available for reorganization. School boards and other groups were also invited to express their views to the Task Force in writing, if they wished to do so. A number of them responded to this invitation. (See Appendix A for a list of visits undertaken and Appendix B for a list of briefs and letters received.)

In the districts not covered by these visits, school boards were invited, by memorandum, to write the Task Force expressing their views and making any suggestions for change in their area. Two responded.

Another important component of the study was a series of meetings with representatives of the various organizations in education. The Task Force met with officials from the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association, the Superintendents' Association, the Department of Education, and a number of other groups. This was done not only to solicit their views on school district boundaries but to give them an opportunity to react to various proposals, which, if implemented, would have implications for their organization and their members.

In order to provide the public at large with an opportunity to express their views on this matter, a newspaper advertisement was placed in papers throughout the Province outlining the work of the Task Force and soliciting written submissions. While there were few responses to this advertisement, the Task Force considered it important that this be done. Perhaps it should be noted that the question of public reaction to further consolidation was one of the major issues discussed with school boards and their employees in the various meetings held throughout the Province.

CHAPTER II

RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

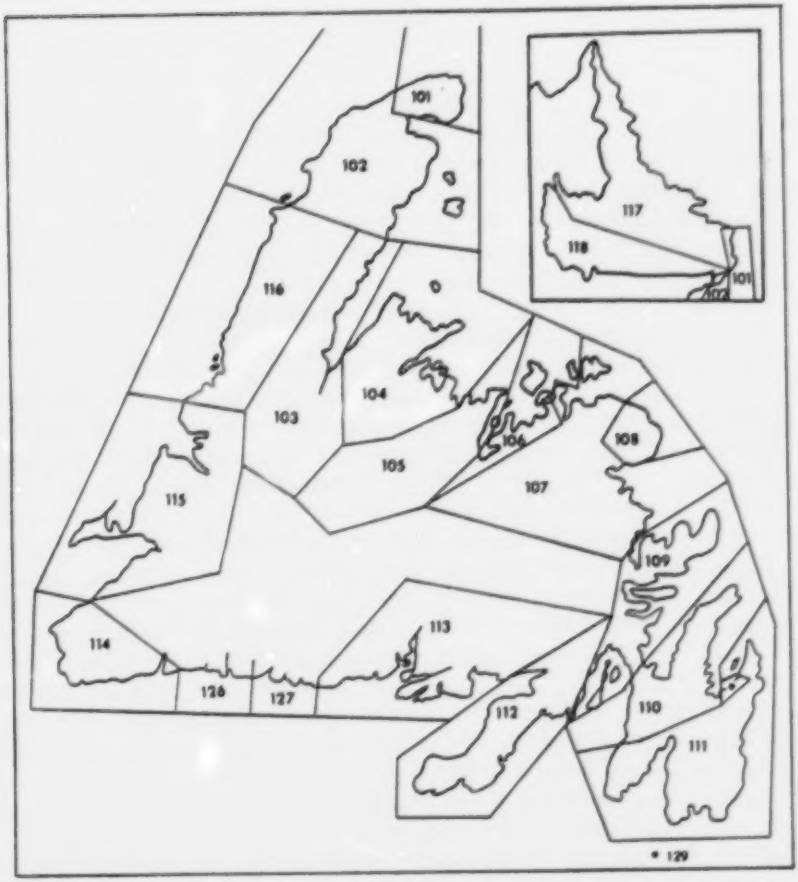
Before integrating their services in 1969, the Anglican, United Church, and Salvation Army Church Authorities administered over 225 school boards in the Province. More than 200 of these boards had fewer than 800 students under their jurisdiction, and only three of them had 2,000 students or more. That picture changed dramatically after Integration. All of these boards, except for Burgeo and Ramea, were consolidated into larger units and their number reduced to 19. Burgeo and Ramea were permitted to continue under a special provision of the Schools Act, the intention being to incorporate them with a larger district within a few years. (See Map I)

As it happened, that incorporation never took place. Indeed, as we stated earlier, very few changes took place in district boundaries after the reorganization of the late sixties. The only really significant change was made in 1973. At that time, the Canada Bay - Main Brook part of Vinland was transferred to the Strait of Belle Isle, and a stretch of the Labrador Coast -- from Cape Charles to Norman Bay -- taken from Labrador East and added to Vinland. These changes were made because it was felt that the areas in question could be administered more effectively by the boards receiving them. Informal observations in the three Districts have since indicated that the revisions were justified.

Even though few changes have taken place in district boundaries since 1969, there have been several developments which have had major implications for district reorganization. One was the diversification of the school curriculum at all levels

MAP I

INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICTS



101 Vinland
102 Strait of Belle Isle
103 Deer Lake
104 Green Bay
105 Exploits Valley
106 Notre Dame
107 Terra Nova
108 Cape Freels
109 Bonavista-Trinity-Placentia
110 Avalon North
111 Avalon Consolidated
112 Burin Peninsula
113 Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay
114 Port aux Basques
115 Bay of Islands-St. George's
116 St. Barbe South
117 Labrador East
118 Labrador West
126 Burgeo
127 Ramea
129 Conception Bay South

and the inclusion of many special programs designed to meet the interest and needs of all children. Curriculum diversification and expansion made it imperative for school boards to provide a minimum level of support services to their schools and teachers. Such services included more sophisticated instructional and resource materials, expertise in specialized program areas, professional development programs for teachers, and a higher level of educational leadership. Generally, smaller districts found it very difficult to offer these services.

Another major development has been improvements in the transportation system in the Province. During the last two decades, many new roads have been constructed, older ones have been upgraded and paved, ferry services have been instituted and improved, and more remote communities in the Province have been connected by regular airline service. Communities once considered completely isolated are now tied into the provincial transportation network. Burgeo and Ramea on the South Coast and the Mary's Harbour - Charlottetown area of coastal Labrador are good illustrations of this.

The other obvious factor has been declining enrolments. In 1971-72, the Province had 162,818 school students registered; in 1986-87, there are only 139,378, even though an extra year was added to the high school program in 1983-84. Recent enrolment projections from the Department of Education indicate that provincial figures will drop to 114,000 within ten years. This will represent a reduction of over 30 percent from the high for 1971-72. In addition to a substantial reduction in the number of pupils enrolled in the Province, there has also been a major drop in the number of schools operated, from 781 in 1971-72 to 594 in 1986-87, a decrease of 24 percent.

As one would expect, the reductions in enrolment and in the number of schools operated in Integrated districts are comparable to those for the Province as a whole, since 57 percent of the children in the

Province are in Integrated schools. Tables I and II contain data illustrating these declines from 1971-72 to 1986-87. Overall, enrolment declined from 91,160 to 78,958, a decline of 13 percent. Enrolment decline was particularly significant in the Districts of Bay of Islands-St. George's, Labrador East, and Exploits Valley.

With a decline in student enrolment of this magnitude, one would normally expect a substantial reduction in the number of teachers employed. However, this was not the case, since the number continued to increase until three years ago. The number employed for the Province as a whole in 1971-72 was 6,648; and the number currently employed is 8,066, an increase of more than 20 percent. This increase in teachers, despite declining enrolments, made possible program diversification and expansion in our schools. The increase in the number of teachers employed in Integrated schools from 1971-72 to 1986-87 is illustrated in Table III. Overall, the percentage increase was 21.3.

Table IV contains five- and ten-year enrolment projections for those Integrated school districts identified for special consideration in this study. It should be emphasized that these projections are based on provincial trends and should be interpreted with considerable caution. Districts projected to decrease most significantly over the ten years include Ramea, St. Barbe South, Cape Freels, and Strait of Belle Isle.

The implications of diversified and expanded school programs, declining enrolments, and improved transportation services for school district boundaries are obvious. More sophisticated school programs require that districts have sufficient students to justify improved physical facilities and expanded professional assistance to teachers. Generally, this calls for bigger districts. But declining enrolments are making districts smaller. In fact, districts which once had low or marginal enrolments may no

TABLE I

ENROLMENTS FOR INTEGRATED DISTRICTS, 1971-72 and 1986-87

DISTRICT	ENROLMENT 1971-72	ENROLMENT 1986-87	% CHANGE ENROLMENT
VINLAND	2,177	1,802	-17.2
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	1,751	2,189	+25.0
DEER LAKE	2,959	2,665	- 9.9
GREEN BAY	3,880	3,439	-11.4
EXPLOITS VALLEY	6,366	4,465	-29.9
NOTRE DAME	4,349	3,357	-22.8
TERRA NOVA	7,733	6,898	-10.8
CAPE FREELS	2,004	1,550	-22.7
BONAVISTA-TRINITY-PLACENTIA	7,172	6,593	- 8.1
AVALON NORTH	10,296	9,390	- 8.8
BURIN PENINSULA	3,778	3,712	- 1.7
BAY D'ESPOIR	2,201	1,922	-12.7
PORT AUX BASQUES	3,176	2,657	-16.3
BAY OF ISLANDS	8,830	5,790	-34.4
ST. BARBE SOUTH	2,364	1,756	-25.7
LABRADOR EAST	3,204	2,239	-30.1
LABRADOR WEST	1,327	2,075	+56.4
BURGEO	649	676	+ 4.2
RAMEA	411	456	+10.9
CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH	2,515	3,321	+32.0
AVALON CONSOLIDATED	14,018	12,006	-14.4
TOTAL	**91,160**	**78,958**	**-13.4**

NOTE: Enrolments in Vinland, Strait of Belle Isle, and Labrador East Districts were affected by boundary revisions in 1973.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS FOR INTEGRATED DISTRICTS, 1971-72 and 1986-87

DISTRICT	SCHOOLS 1971-72	SCHOOLS 1986-87	% CHANGE SCHOOLS
VINLAND	14	15	+ 7.1
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	23	17	-26.0
DEER LAKE	16	14	-12.5
GREEN BAY	37	26	-29.7
EXPLOITS VALLEY	21	19	- 9.5
NOTRE DAME	18	15	-16.7
TERRA NOVA	42	29	-31.0
CAPE FREELS	13	10	-23.1
BONAVISTA-TRINITY-PLACENTIA	63	27	-57.1
AVALON NORTH	62	42	-32.3
BURIN PENINSULA	25	18	-28.0
BAY D'ESPOIR	21	15	-28.6
PORT AUX BASQUES	14	13	- 7.1
BAY OF ISLANDS	36	18	-50.0
ST. BARBE SOUTH	18	16	-11.1
LABRADOR EAST	17	12	-29.4
LABRADOR WEST	3	5	+66.7
BURGEO	2	2	-
RAMEA	3	3	-
CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH	10	7	-30.0
AVALON CONSOLIDATED	33	29	-12.1
TOTAL	**491**	**352**	**-28.3**

NOTE: The number of schools in Vinland, Strait of Belle Isle, and Labrador East was affected by boundary revisions in 1973.

TABLE III

NUMBER OF TEACHERS BY INTEGRATED DISTRICTS, 1971-72 and 1986-87

DISTRICT	1971-72	1986-87	% CHANGE 1971-72 1986-87
VINLAND	87	114	+31.0
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	77	140	+81.8
DEER LAKE	115	167	+45.2
GREEN BAY	182	212	+16.5
EXPLOITS VALLEY	261	283	+ 8.4
NOTRE DAME	169	214	+26.6
TERRA NOVA	343	418	+21.9
CAPE FREELS	90	96	+ 6.7
BONAVISTA-TRINITY-PLACENTIA	297	356	+19.9
AVALON NORTH	446	523	+17.3
AVALON CONSOLIDATED	541	651	+20.3
BURIN PENINSULA	150	214	+42.7
BAY D'ESPOIR	88	128	+45.6
PORT AUX BASQUES	125	146	+16.8
BAY OF ISLANDS	353	320	- 9.3
ST. BARBE SOUTH	98	115	+17.3
LABRADOR EAST	140	168	+20.0
LABRADOR WEST	90	116	+28.9
BURGEO	27	38	+40.7
RAMEA	17	26	+52.9
CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH	106	168	+58.5
TOTAL	**3,802**	**4,613**	**+21.3**

NOTE: The figures for 1986-87 are based on the teacher salary units allocated by the Department of Education for that year. The number of teachers for Vinland, Strait of Belle Isle, and Labrador East Districts was affected by boundary revisions in 1973.

TABLE IV

PROJECTED ENROLMENTS FOR

SELECTED DISTRICTS, 1991-92 and 1996-97

DISTRICTS	ENROLMENT 1986-87	PROJECTED ENROLMENT 1991-92	PROJECTED ENROLMENT 1996-97	% CHANGE 1986-87 1996-97
VINLAND	1,802	1,680	1,560	-13.4
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	2,189	1,970	1,777	-18.8
DEER LAKE	2,665	2,529	2,281	-14.4
CAPE FREELS	1,550	1,387	1,251	-19.3
BAY D'ESPOIR	1,922	1,762	1,589	-17.3
PORT AUX BASQUES	2,657	2,459	2,218	-16.5
ST. BARBE SOUTH	1,756	1,532	1,287	-26.7
LABRADOR EAST	2,239	2,021	1,823	-18.6
LABRADOR WEST	2,075	1,796	1,620	-21.9
BURGEO	676	629	567	-16.1
RAMEA	456	366	330	-27.6

SOURCE: DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

longer be able to economically offer the range of services they once did and may not be able to respond to needs for additional services at all.

The impact of the vastly improved transportation system is more positive. To begin with, it has made it possible to reduce the number of schools administered, through consolidation. New roads and air routes have made schools more accessible to the district office and, consequently, easier to administer and service. They have brought once isolated communities into the social and cultural milieu of more urban communities. Smaller numbers of schools and better transportation services have made it possible in most rural regions of the Province for bigger geographical areas to be serviced by one school board. In short, some of the smaller educational districts we now have can be consolidated into bigger and more effective units.

In order to supply more background information concerning the districts selected for special consideration, we have included Tables V and VI. Table V gives the number and classification of schools for each of the eleven smaller districts. These data provide some indication of the administration workload for district office personnel. It should be noted that discretion was used in classifying schools because a number of them did not fit neatly into any one of the four categories listed. They accommodate grades in two or more of these groups. For the sake of convenience, they are placed in the groups they appear to fit most comfortably. Table VI contains a breakdown of the professional staff for each district office.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY CLASSIFICATION FOR SELECTED DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	SECONDARY	JUNIOR HIGH	ELEMENTARY	ALL-GRADE	TOTAL
VINLAND	1	-	8	6	15
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	5	-	10	2	17
DEER LAKE	4	1	8	1	14
CAPE FREELS	3	-	6	1	10
BAY D'ESPOIR	4	-	6	5	15
PORT AUX BASQUES	2	1	6	4	13
ST. BARBE SOUTH	4	-	10	2	16
LABRADOR EAST	1	1	3	7	12
LABRADOR WEST	2	-	3	-	5
BURGEO	1	-	1	-	2
RAMEA	1	-	1	1	3
TOTAL	**28**	**3**	**62**	**29**	**122**

NOTE: Discretion was used in determining which category a number of these schools fitted.

TABLE VI

NUMBER OF DISTRICT OFFICE STAFF FOR SELECTED DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	SUPTS	ASSIST. SUPTS	PROGRAM CO-ORD.	TOTAL
VINLAND	1	1	4	6
STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE	1	1	4	6
DEER LAKE	1	1	5	7
CAPE FREELS	1	1	3	5
BAY D'ESPOIR	1	2	6(Part Time)	9
PORT AUX BASQUES	1	1	4	6
ST. BARBE SOUTH	1	1	2	4
LABRADOR EAST	1	1	5	7
LABRADOR WEST	1	1	5	7
BURGEO	-	-	2	2
RAMEA	-	-	1	1

CHAPTER III

APPROACHES TO SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Throughout North America, school district consolidation has been one of the most successfully implemented educational policies of the past two or three decades. Advocates have argued that such consolidation, particularly in rural areas, would result in broader curriculum programs and services and provide economies of scale in purchasing, staffing, school operation, transportation, and school construction. While there is little research to conclusively support these claims, the general consensus is that consolidation has indeed contributed to recent progress in education.

The steps taken to reorganize school districts in this Province in the late 1960's have been documented earlier in this Report. Evidence suggests that many reorganized districts have made broader curriculum programs, better instruction, more ready access to educational materials, and better school facilities a reality in many communities. But the job of providing the best possible education for all children is far from complete. As we pointed out in the last chapter, there are new pressures and demands on the educational system, including demands for a more sophisticated curriculum and more specialized services for teachers, which, coupled with declining enrolments and scarce resources, have sparked a new interest in this issue. There are current claims that a more efficient district structure would help educators better meet the challenges that lie ahead during the remainder of the century.

What, then, are the arguments for and against further consolidation of smaller school districts? Are

there research findings that suggest an optimum size for a school district today? What are the claimed arguments for and against each of a number of possible alternatives to further district consolidation, including the establishment of regional service centers by the Department of Education, district sharing of educational programs and services by school boards in certain areas, and the provision of additional funding to smaller districts making it possible for them to expand educational opportunities within existing boundaries? These are the questions that will be addressed in this section of our Report as a basis for recommendations made later.

FURTHER CONSOLIDATION

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

The major arguments for school district consolidation have already been alluded to. A more complete statement would include the following:

(1) Larger school districts can offer a wider range of student programs and services in all areas of instruction than can smaller ones.

(2) Larger school districts can extend the scope of district consultative services to meet the individual needs of teachers within an ever-changing society.

(3) Larger districts make possible the wise and efficient use of economic resources. Fuller utilization can be made of expensive facilities and teaching resources. Savings can result from such things as bulk purchasing and combined transportation costs. Larger districts may be in a better position to improve business management through use of computers.

(4) Reorganization can help bring about greater equality of educational opportunity for students. Differences that are tolerated among independent smaller districts become unacceptable in the consolidated district -- differences in curriculum offerings, instructional practices, and working conditions. The tendency of the new district is to "level up" rather than "level down" services.

(5) While research concerning the advantages of consolidation has not been conclusive, many studies have shown that reorganization works to the benefit of students. These studies suggest that there is a direct and positive relationship between school district size and such factors as student achievement, educational costs, breadth of educational programs, extra-curricular activities, special education programs, availability of professional services for teachers, and school facilities.

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

Arguments presented by opponents of consolidation often include the following:

(1) Bigger is not necessarily better. Many small school districts offer high quality education for students and an excellent working environment for educators.

(2) Local control of education may be lost or diminished. The establishment of a single board, where two or more existed before, increases the distance between the voters and their elected representatives and, therefore, reduces local interest and control. Consolidation could also result in the domination of the reorganized district by one segment of it -- perhaps the most populated or politically powerful portion.

(3) School district consolidation could result in the centralization of schools and more bussing of students. Many parents simply do not want to see their children subjected to longer bus rides.

(4) Presently employed personnel in individual districts could be negatively affected by mergers, for they may be required to relinquish present loyalties and reassign them to the new district.

(5) Larger districts require central office staff to have contact with more teachers and more schools distributed over wider geographical areas. Travelling time may be substantially increased, thereby lowering the level of services provided to individual teachers.

(6) The monetary savings of consolidation could very well be wiped out by the increased costs of transportation of central office staff or the creation of more bureaucracy.

(7) Districts that have operated efficiently and not acquired a heavy debt burden may not want to assume the heavier debts of another district.

(8) Consolidation often creates uncertainties among teachers concerning job tenure in the reorganized district. Uncertainties are also created among non-teaching employees when workers in one district or one job classification are organized for collective bargaining purposes and others are not.

(9) A reduction in the number of districts does not automatically result in better education. Without additional resources, the consolidation of small, poor, inefficient districts may result in larger, poor, inefficient districts.

THE QUESTION OF OPTIMUM SIZE

There is little consensus among experts concerning the minimum, maximum, or optimum size for a school district. Many studies of this issue focus on the number of students to be served, the taxable resources available in the district, the geographic area encompassed, as well as the quality of professional and leadership personnel.

Even though there is no "absolute" optimum size for school districts, this does not mean that the size or scale of the school district is unrelated to the economic efficiency with which it produces educational services. Many authors have concluded that the principles of economies of scale which operate for most economic enterprises also operate for the educational enterprise. The size of the school enterprise does effect the economic efficiency with which it produces educational services. The same level of educational output will incur differences in cost depending on the enrolment of the school district. In other words, the average cost per student will decline (economies) as the size of the system increases until at some point (optimum size) the student cost begins to rise again (dis-economies). This phenomenon is generally represented by a U-shaped cost curve.

The dis-economies associated with small districts are related to the fact that minimum teacher and other resources required for any level of educational outcome will not be fully utilized at low enrolments. That is, these resources represent minimum "fixed capital" requirements that are necessary to provide educational offerings of a given quality. Thus, at very low levels of enrolment, providing the same quality of education and services requires extra funds. Small schools must operate, for example, with lower pupil/teacher ratios than larger schools in order to provide the needed programs and services. And, other things being equal, a low pupil/teacher ratio results in higher costs per pupil for

instructional salaries. At the school district level, the same principles apply when specialized staff are provided.

Costs may also be high for very large districts. Generally, the trend is for administrative costs to increase in such districts.

A review of the literature demonstrated that it is difficult to suggest an optimum size in terms of student enrolment. What is optimum in one province may not be optimum or even possible in another. Demography, geography, and economic conditions, as well as education philosophy, are determining factors. The availability of services to local school boards from other levels of government is also a factor. In a number of provinces and states, intermediate or regional districts have been established to provide selected services to local boards. This has made it possible for some small districts to exist and still provide reasonably adequate programs and services for students and teachers.

The suggested minimum number of students required within a local school district to provide a quality educational program at a reasonable cost has increased over the years. During the 1950's and 1960's, the recommended minimum per district was often 2,000 pupils or more, but presently, most suggest four or five times that number for a district to meet the educational and business responsibilities of today -- particularly if there is no effective regional educational service agency available to complement the local district. Several studies suggest 9,000 to 12,000 pupils as the optimum size for administrative purposes. After reviewing the literature, the 1982 Integrated Education Council Sub-Committee on School District Boundaries concluded that few people advocated districts having fewer than 2,000 students. More commonly, authorities recommended districts in excess of 10,000 students. Perhaps, then, 10,000 students is the enrolment needed to support a comprehensive educational program.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, discussion has centered largely on the issue of minimum size. When school district consolidation took place in the late 1960's, the figure of 2,000 students was selected as a base. School districts with fewer students, particularly those in "remote" areas, could operate with Ministerial approval. Presently, there are eight such districts in the Province. The number of Ministerially-approved districts will increase unless further consolidation is undertaken.

THE REGIONAL SERVICE CONCEPT

In several provinces of Canada and states of the United States, regional or intermediate school districts have been established to provide educational programs and services that could not be effectively and efficiently operated at the local school district level. Functions generally assigned to such units have been instructional leadership, specialized educational programs, and certain management and purchasing services for smaller districts. More recently, the tendency has been to label these units "service centers," reflecting a movement away from control and regulatory functions towards more leadership and service functions. In many ways, the regional center is seen as a logical compromise between fragmented school districts which are too small to provide quality educational programs and overly centralized systems which are cumbersome and unresponsive to local needs.

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

The following advantages are often given by the supporters of the regional service concept:

(1) The unit or center can provide certain services, facilities, and equipment that meet needs common to all districts but may be under-utilized or uneconomically provided by individual districts. Included could be: operating instructional

materials centers, providing certain pupil personnel services, and providing specialized consultant services (subject areas, instructional materials, special education, vocational education).

(2) The center can provide a logical focus for co-operative efforts among local school districts within a region. Planning and arranging programs of education for exceptional children and in-service education for teachers and principals are examples of such co-operation. This can lead to greater efficiency in use of public monies by encouraging districts to profit from each other's experience and by avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort among districts and schools.

(3) The center can permit the retention of local school boards, with local control and involvement.

(4) While such centers can be service- and teacher-oriented, they may, at times, perform selected monitoring roles for the Department of Education.

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

The arguments often made to oppose this suggested alternative to consolidation of small school districts include the following:

(1) There could be controversy concerning which specialized services could best be provided at the regional level and which at the local district level, and who should provide them.

(2) Just as there are basic questions about functions of the intermediate or regional office, there are also questions of structure and financing. Line and staff relationships among regional and local district personnel could be difficult to define.

(3) Regionalization done without sensitivity and imagination could result in the establishment of a bureaucracy, with more centralized decision-making.

(4) Consultants at the regional district level may be expected to cover too large a geographical area.

(5) Because regional centers would have to be designed to reflect needs and services available at the local level, a wide variety of practices would emerge throughout the Province, leading to considerable controversy concerning funding fairness.

(6) In some geographical areas, most of the benefits of a regional service unit, without any of the disadvantages, can be achieved through further consolidation of smaller districts.

SCHOOL DISTRICT SHARING

Another suggested alternative to the consolidation of smaller districts, if there is to be no regional center, is a plan of co-operation among districts. For example, an audio-visual center could be established through the voluntary co-operation of several districts and the cost prorated among the districts. Or small districts might contract with larger ones to provide services, such as certain curriculum consultants or classes for the physically and mentally handicapped, which small districts may find impractical to provide on their own.

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

There are a number of advantages of school district sharing. These include the following:

(1) This arrangement may make possible the provision of additional educational programs, services, and facilities without losing the advantages of local

interest and local control of education provided by local school boards.

(2) School district sharing may take place across denominational lines as well as among boards of the same denomination or denominational group.

(3) The cost of shared services may be financed by extra funding from the Provincial Government.

(4) Provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador have had experience with shared services among school districts.

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

Included in the suggested disadvantages of the shared services option are the following:

(1) The establishment of co-operative agreements requires a high level of vision and commitment on the part of all concerned.

(2) Financial arrangements may be difficult to work out, even if one district employs a shared staff member, for example, and then bills co-operating districts for their shares of the cost.

(3) Once an agreement has been worked out by districts, there may be problems explaining and selling the plan to the community, the staff, and students.

(4) A structure and procedure must be established to deal with ongoing problems that develop in the implementation of any agreement.

(5) In the implementation of any agreement, local districts may have to abandon certain local traditions and compromise on various issues. Local staff members may have to be reassigned and facilities rescheduled.

(6) Sharing among boards of various denominations may require widespread consultation and agreements at the provincial as well as the local level.

(7) Travel time for teachers and consultants may be increased substantially as a result of district sharing.

THE STATUS QUO, WITH EXTRA FUNDING FOR SMALLER DISTRICTS

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

The arguments for and against the retention of smaller districts with extra funding are obvious. Included in the claimed advantages of this option are the following:

(1) Local communities can continue their interest in and control of education.

(2) Highly qualified teachers are now available for all schools and districts, not just those in urban communities. Additional funding, provided on a program basis, can ensure high quality education in small schools and districts.

(3) This option makes it possible for "remote and necessary" small districts (those that cannot be consolidated for geographical reasons) to provide a good education for students.

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

Included in the stated disadvantages of this option are the following:

(1) Program offerings and instructional services could remain limited unless very large sums of money in the form of provincial grants are made available.

(2) There could be problems in determining which jurisdictions qualify for small district support and the level of differential support that may be provided for such districts. Weighting is very difficult in the development of funding programs for smaller districts.

(3) There could be problems of justifying extra funding for recognized smaller districts without encouraging the establishment of additional ones in other areas of the Province where groups may wish to withdraw from larger districts to form smaller ones.

SUMMARY

As noted in Chapter II, the present is an appropriate time for a review of school district boundaries in Newfoundland and Labrador. Few changes have been made in boundaries since widespread consolidation took place in the late 1960's. Presently, we are experiencing declining enrolments and demands for better use of educational resources. At the same time, there are demands for new educational programs and services for teachers as well as students. These factors, among others, confirm the need to review all educational structures, at the local level as well as the provincial.

While the most commonly proposed approach to school district restructuring is consolidation, other options include the establishment of regional or intermediate service centers with specialized staff personnel, the development of regional services through school board sharing, and the strengthening of smaller districts through the provision of extra funding. The proposals made in the next chapter of this Report involve a combination of these approaches. Further consolidation of Integrated districts is possible in certain regions of the Province. District sharing, including inter-denominational sharing, is proposed for other regions. In still others, some

form of regional services may be necessary. In provinces such as this one, with regions of low population density, scarce resources, and difficult climatic and travel conditions, school districts must be designed to meet local needs if comprehensive educational programs are to be made available for all students.

CHAPTER IV

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter deals primarily with the eleven districts requiring special consideration under our Terms of Reference. It outlines the various options available in each area and states the course of action we recommend. The Chapter concludes with some observations and long-term recommendations for a number of other areas in the Province.

From the beginning, the Task Force approached the issue of district consolidation with a number of basic questions in mind. They included the following:

(1) What are the potential educational advantages and disadvantages to both students and teachers if we consolidate or reorganize?

(2) What economies or dis-economies of scale might result from consolidation or reorganization? What start-up costs might there be?

(3) What effects will consolidation or reorganization have on provincial allocations of teachers, board office staff, and funds in the reorganized districts?

(4) Will the reorganized area be sufficiently compact geographically for the school board to meet regularly and for the board office to provide adequate services to all its schools, teachers, and students at reasonable costs?

(5) Will local interest and parental involvement be maintained in the more distant parts of the reorganized districts?

(6) Will consolidation or reorganization result in further school closures and more student bussing?

(7) Will one district involved in consolidation see itself as "bailing out" another district in terms of either short- or long-term debts?

(8) What are the enrolment projections for the area?

(9) Are there alternatives to school district consolidation or reorganization, such as the provision of regional services, district sharing, or the provision of special funding for necessarily small districts?

These questions served as guidelines in arriving at the recommendations contained in this Report, since they indicate the kinds of information necessary for making decisions about school district reorganization and consolidation in this Province.

With respect to minimum district size, in terms of student enrolment, the Task Force considers the 2,000 figure to be reasonable in some areas, given the geography and demography of this Province, even though four or five times that number would be desirable. While it may always be necessary to operate one or two districts with fewer than 2,000 students, we maintain that further consolidation or some form of inter-denominational co-operation can eliminate most of the smaller districts now in operation. We also feel that it might be unnecessary or unwise to permit any Integrated district to continue if its enrolment falls below 1,500.

BURGEO AND RAMEA

The District of Burgeo has an enrolment of less than 700 students, two schools (one system) and two Program Co-ordinators, one of whom acts as a Superintendent. Ramea has 450 students, three schools,

and one Program Co-ordinator. Both Districts are relatively isolated. Ramea is 10 miles from Burgeo by water, but is connected by a daily ferry service, and Burgeo is connected to Corner Brook by 130 miles of road, nearly 60 miles of which are unpaved.

Since there are no other boards operating in this area, we did not consider the regional service concept to have much relevance here, certainly not as an alternative to some form of consolidation. Consequently, in our separate meetings with the two School Boards, we identified and discussed the following options:

(1) The continuation of both Districts in their present form, perhaps with special assistance and with a greater sharing of services between themselves and with Bay of Islands-St. George's Integrated School district.

(2) Consolidation of Ramea and Burgeo into one small district.

(3) Consolidation with Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay Integrated School District to make one South Coast district.

(4) Consolidation with Port Aux Basques Integrated School District.

(5) Consolidation with Bay of Islands-St. George's Integrated School District.

Although one of the Boards expressed a strong preference for preserving the present arrangement, we felt that this was not a realistic option, even with special assistance and a greater measure of sharing than now takes place. The required in-service training for teachers, new demands for consultation and guidance to teachers in specialists areas, and the need for general educational leadership cannot be adequately provided in districts as small as these. We believe these deficiencies have been reflected in the

achievement of students over the years. An examination of the C.T.B.S. results for these Districts seems to bear this out since they are well below provincial averages. Granted, there may be other factors contributing to this, but we feel the generalization is valid. Furthermore, the continuation of these two small Districts would have implications for other areas of the Province which might also want to have their own small local school districts, and which might have equal justification for seeking them.

We rejected the second option, that is, the consolidation of Ramea and Burgeo, for the same reasons we rejected the first. Neither did the Boards themselves consider consolidation of the two Districts a viable course of action.

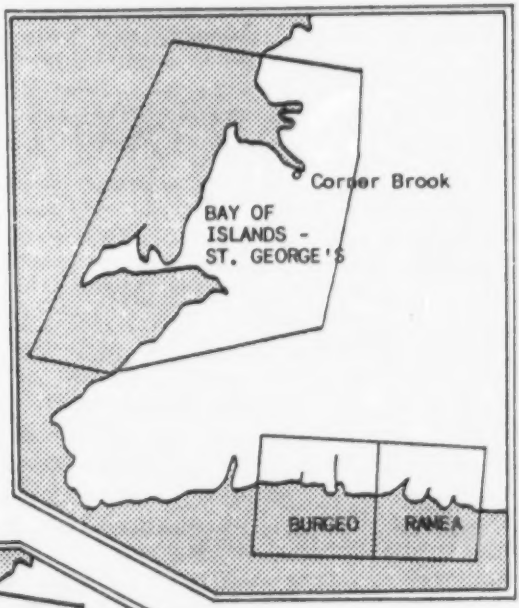
The third option -- consolidation with Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay -- was also rejected after some reflection. It would be extremely difficult and very costly, in terms of time and money, for a board office to deliver services to that long stretch of the South Coast between Burgeo and Rencontre East. Such a consolidated district would still be too small to offer the services required. It appeared more logical, therefore, to consider consolidation with Port Aux Basques or Bay of Islands-St. George's.

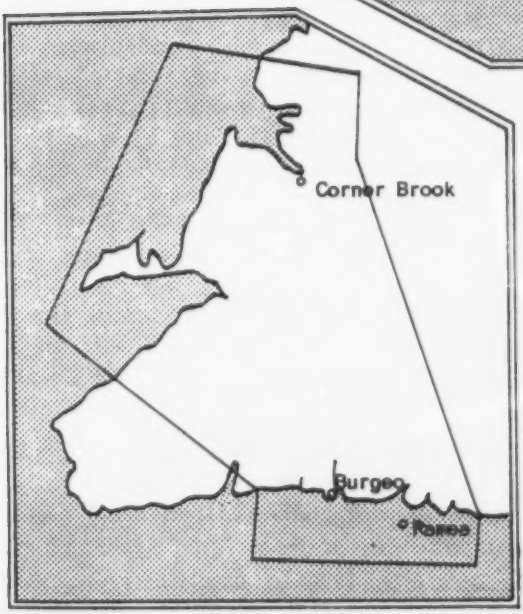
We believe the best arrangement is for Burgeo and Ramea to be consolidated with Bay of Islands-St. George's. The new road linking Burgeo to the Trans Canada Highway and the improved ferry service make communication with Corner Brook much easier than with Port Aux Basques. The area is now associated with Corner Brook for medical purposes; shopping is done in Corner Brook, and the whole outside orientation is towards that City. It is true that a section of the road is difficult to travel, but this situation should improve in time. (See Map II)

MAP II

BAY OF ISLANDS-ST. GEORGE'S, BURGEO, AND RAMEA
INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

PRESENT BOUNDARIES





PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

There is little doubt that consolidation with Bay of Islands-St. George's would make it possible for the schools in the Ramea-Burgeo area to receive a wider range of support services from the school board office. It would also enable the teachers to participate more fully in in-service programs and to interact professionally with their peers in other school systems. This is essential for professional growth and stimulation. The overall result would be an improved standard of education for the students.

We recognize that the parents in Burgeo and Ramea are very interested in education and take great pride in their educational accomplishments. Over the years, they have been responsible for the development and maintenance of excellent school facilities. It would be unfortunate for this parental involvement to be lessened in any way as a result of consolidation. For this reason, we feel that, with consolidation, local committees should be established in both Ramea and Burgeo under Section 22 of the Schools Act. These committees should be delegated specific responsibilities relating to the administration and daily operation of schools, in accordance with that Section. This would have the added advantage of assisting the Corner Brook board office in the day-to-day operation of schools. To facilitate this arrangement, consideration should be given to maintaining a regional office on the coast, with an Assistant Superintendent who could oversee the work of the committees and coordinate the activities of program specialists from the central office.

The Task Force, therefore, recommends:

THAT THE DISTRICTS OF BURGEO AND RAMEA BE CONSOLIDATED WITH BAY OF ISLANDS-ST. GEORGE'S DISTRICT AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE.

STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE AND VINLAND

The Strait of Belle Isle District comprises the area between Castor River in the south and Eddy's Cove in the north, including Canada Bay and Hare Bay, and also the southern part of the Labrador Coast between Lanse Aux Clair and Red Bay. The total student enrolment is approximately 2,200 in 17 school buildings. Vinland District includes the northern tip of the Peninsula -- the area between Goose Cove and Cook's Harbour -- plus that part of the Labrador Coast between Cape St. Charles in the south and Norman Bay in the north. That District has 1,800 students enrolled in 15 schools, seven of which are on coastal Labrador accessible to the board office only by plane or boat. Including Superintendents, each District has six professional educators in its central office.

The two Districts combined have fewer than 4,000 students at the present time; provincial projections indicate that the number will be reduced to 3,500 in five years and to approximately 3,300 within ten years. School Board projections suggest that the number may be even less.

From our analysis of the situation, we concluded that, in this area of the Province, neither a regional service unit nor district sharing of services could be considered an adequate alternative to the consolidation of existing districts. There is no doubt, however, that once reorganization is completed, some form of sharing agreement among the different denominational boards operating in the area could work to the mutual advantage of all schools, particularly those administered by other denominational groups where the district office is very far removed from the schools.*

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*Roman Catholic and Pentecostal schools could be associated with the reorganized Integrated district for instructional purposes. These schools could be called "Associated Schools."

Our discussions with the two School Boards and their officials led us to identify four different options which were seriously considered. They were:

(1) A continuation of the present arrangement without any change in district boundaries, with special assistance and more sharing of services between the two districts.

(2) The transfer of Canada Bay and Hare Bay back to Vinland to increase its enrolment to more than 2,000 students and the transfer of part of St. Barbe South to Strait of Belle Isle to compensate for its loss.

(3) The establishment of a separate district for coastal Labrador and the consolidation of the remaining parts of Strait of Belle Isle and Vinland into another district.

(4) The consolidation of Strait of Belle Isle and Vinland into one district, with special assistance in terms of resources provided by Government.

Careful consideration had to be given to maintaining the present arrangement because the area is extensive, transportation is sometimes difficult, and administration is more costly than in other parts of the Province. But we concluded that even with special assistance in the form of grants and personnel and a more effective sharing arrangement, the two board offices operating independently of each other could not offer the same measure of expertise and support service as one bigger district. Moreover, rapidly declining enrolments would make it unrealistic to maintain two districts in this area in five or ten years' time. For these reasons, we could not support this option.

The proposal to transfer the Canada Bay - Hare Bay area back to Vinland was raised with both Boards. This addition to Vinland would increase its enrolment by

approximately 650 students and would raise its total enrolment to over 2,000 for the next two or three years. As a result of this change, the Strait of Belle Isle District would have to be extended south to Cow Head to replace the students lost (Cow Head is around 140 miles from Flower's Cove and about 70 miles from Deer Lake). The implementation of this proposal would mean a realignment of boundaries to give the two Districts a minimum of 2,000 students for the next four or five years, a very temporary solution at best. Moreover, the arrangement would not appreciably affect the level of service now provided by both Boards and would, therefore, have little or no significant impact on the quality of education offered. We rejected the proposal on much the same grounds as we rejected the option of retaining the present boundaries.

The suggestion to establish a special district for coastal Labrador was an interesting one and appeared to have some merit. Most of the schools on the coast are small, all are isolated, some more than others, and resources are very limited. These schools require special consideration above and beyond that granted to other schools in the Province. On the other hand, a coastal Labrador district would have few students, roughly 800, and would not likely have the personnel and financial resources of a bigger district. What is more important, it would be virtually impossible to administer services efficiently since there is no one community on the coast readily accessible to all the others. To travel between the southern section of the district and the northern section, one could have to pass through the airport on the Northern Peninsula. Forteau and Mary's Harbour are closer to St. Anthony than to each other. Indeed, our discussions with representatives from the area convinced us that coastal Labrador is strongly oriented to the Northern Peninsula and improving transportation facilities tend to consolidate this orientation. Considering everything, we thought it would be a mistake to support this proposal.

This leaves the option of consolidating the two existing Districts into one. (See Map III) The major disadvantage would be the extra difficulty encountered in administering a bigger geographical area where travel has been traditionally difficult and expensive. But the travel situation is changing. The new road between the Strait of Belle Isle and St. Anthony, the daily airline service to coastal Labrador, the new airport in Hare Bay, and the upgraded ferry service to Blanc Sablon have all contributed to a vastly improving network of communications in the area. We believe one school board with properly organized professional staff could offer more specialized direction and support services to all the schools in the area.

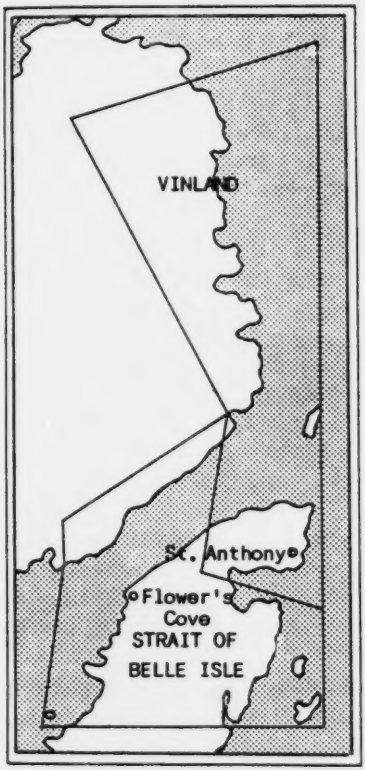
In recognizing the special needs of Labrador, we feel that, with consolidation, additional staff, possibly an Assistant Superintendent and one additional Program Co-ordinator, should be placed in the board office and charged with the responsibility of providing leadership for Labrador schools, including the co-ordination and management of in-service activities for teachers. We also feel that the School Boards (Allocation of Moneys) Regulations, 1975, should be further adjusted to provide additional funds for schools on the coast. With respect to this area, our recommendation is:

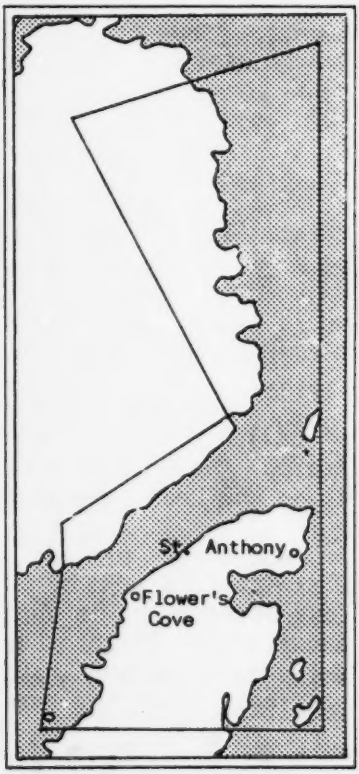
THAT THE STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE AND VINLAND DISTRICTS BE CONSOLIDATED AND THAT THE NEW DISTRICT BE GIVEN ADDITIONAL STAFF AND FUNDING.

MAP III

STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE AND VINLAND
INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

PRESENT BOUNDARIES





PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

ST. BARBE SOUTH

The St. Barbe South Integrated School District extends from Trout River to Hawke's Bay and has an enrolment of 1,750 students registered in 16 schools. The School Board office has a Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, and two Program Co-ordinators in addition to its other staff.

In our meeting with representatives of the School Board and its officials, three different options were discussed for this area. They were:

(1) A continuation of the present District with some form of regional services and more sharing with other districts.

(2) An extension to the existing District by adding the southern part of the Strait of Belle Isle District.

(3) Consolidation with Deer Lake District.

A continuation of the present boundaries was rejected on both educational and economic grounds. We think the enrolment is too small for the District to be viable, even with a greater sharing of services with other districts. The regional office approach would have limited effectiveness in this area because there are few schools operated by other boards.

Transferring a portion of the District to Strait of Belle Isle was rejected, for the reasons already stated, and also because the orientation of the people is in the Deer Lake direction.

About 60 percent of the population in this District live within an hour's drive or so from Deer Lake where there is another board office well equipped and staffed. All of the communities in St. Barbe South are linked to Deer Lake or Corner Brook for medical services, shopping, and even social activities. There

seems to be no convincing reason why they could not be linked for educational purposes as well.

It is clearly obvious that consolidation with Deer Lake is the preferred option for this District. (See Map IV) Such a move could work to the mutual advantage of both St. Barbe South and Deer Lake, which also has a declining enrolment, since it would increase the number of central office staff and provide more flexibility for organizing the delivery of both professional and administrative services. The Task Force, therefore, recommends:

THAT THE ST. BARBE SOUTH AND DEER LAKE DISTRICTS BE CONSOLIDATED.

CAPE FREELS

This was the smallest of the consolidated districts visited, both in terms of geographical area included within its boundaries and the number of students enrolled. The District extends from Trinity to Lumsden, a distance of approximately 40 miles, and has an enrolment of only 1,550. The main road through the District leads from one section of the Terra Nova District to another. In fact, we were informed that Program Co-ordinators from Terra Nova District drive through Cape Freels to get to some of their own schools.

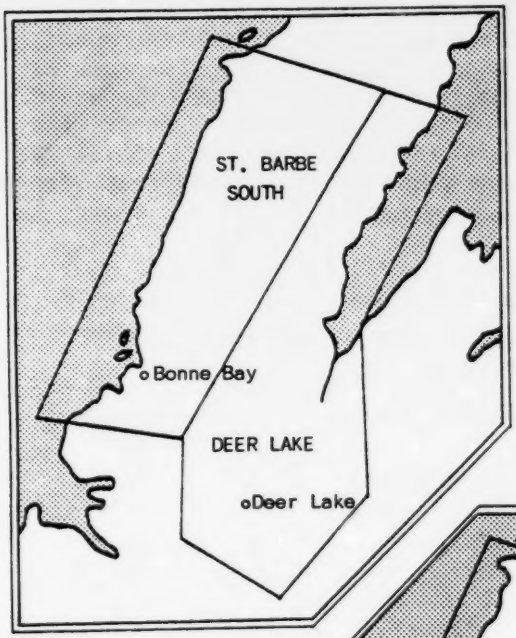
In discussing the options for the Cape Freels District, the following were considered:

(1) Maintenance of the status quo, with regional or shared services.

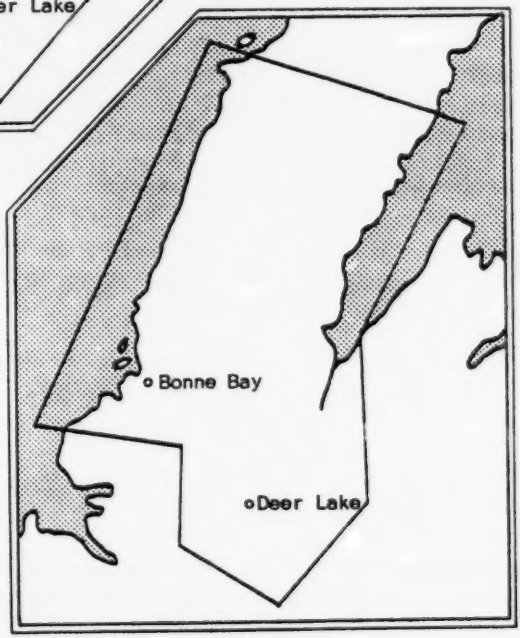
(2) Transferring part of Terra Nova District, perhaps the Musgrave Harbour and the Hare Bay areas, to

MAP IV

ST. BARBE SOUTH AND DEER LAKE
INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICTS



PRESENT BOUNDARIES



PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

Cape Freels. This would raise the enrolment by more than 1,000 students.

(3) Consolidation of Cape Freels District with Terra Nova.

For various reasons, including the very small and declining enrolment of the District and the proximity to Gander, the Task Force rejected the first option. Even the provision of regional services and a better sharing arrangement with Terra Nova District, as helpful as they might be, would not make continuation of the District a comparable alternative to some form of reorganization.

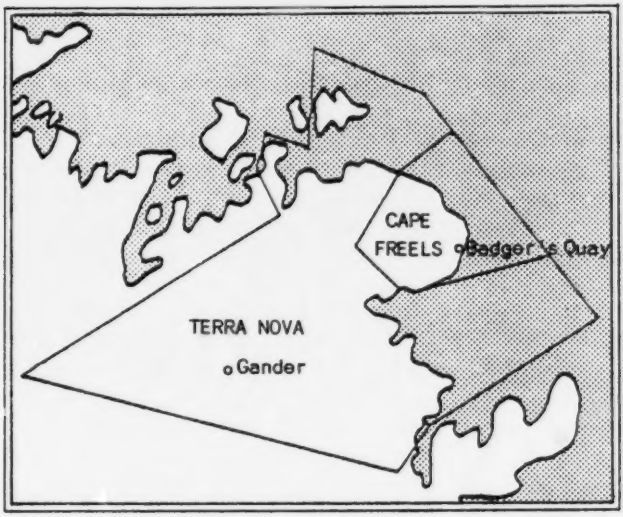
The Cape Freels School Board expressed a strong preference for the second option, and we can appreciate their reasons for doing so. However, the Terra Nova School Board was equally firm in stating its wish to retain all of its present schools. In addition, a number of principals from the affected areas expressed grave educational concern over such a proposed move. Both Board and principals contended that the transfer could have detrimental educational effects on a good system it took years to develop. We concur with that position. Moreover, in a few years the enrolment of the extended Cape Freels District could fall below 2,000 unless the Gambo-Glovertown areas were included as well.

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives, it was felt that the consolidation of the two Districts would be to the educational advantage of all concerned. (See Map V) The Task Force, therefore, recommends:

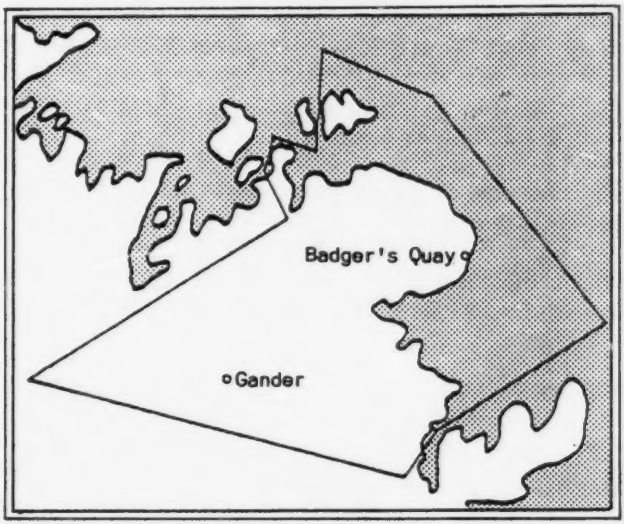
THAT THE CAPE FREELS AND TERRA NOVA DISTRICTS BE CONSOLIDATED.

MAP V

TERRA NOVA AND CAPE FREELS
INTEGRATED SCHOOL DISTRICTS



PRESENT BOUNDARIES



PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

LABRADOR EAST AND LABRADOR WEST

These two Districts are considered together because any changes in the boundaries of one would have implications for the other. Labrador West includes the town of Wabush and Labrador City and has a student enrolment of 2,075 accommodated in five schools. Labrador East includes the remainder of Labrador, excluding the coastal areas incorporated in the Strait of Belle Isle and Vinland Districts. It has an enrolment of 2,200 students registered in 12 schools.

Both Districts have experienced a sharp decline in enrolments in recent years. In these Districts, it is very difficult for a number of reasons to project enrolments with any degree of accuracy. For example, it is uncertain whether or not the schools in designated Native communities will be placed under Native control. About 600 students are now enrolled in these communities. The impact on enrolments of the proposed NATO Training Center, if placed in Goose Bay, and the effect of the escalating military activity in that community are also unknown. If one adds to this the possibility of the Pentecostal Assemblies building their own school in Happy Valley, projecting enrolments becomes a very difficult exercise at this time. It is equally difficult to predict what will happen in Labrador West where the population depends largely on the activities of the mining companies.

In both Districts, there was considerable discussion concerning the possibility of some form of inter-denominational co-operation for the administration of schools, as an alternative to consolidation. The sharing of some services between Roman Catholic and Integrated Boards was evident in both Districts. Accordingly, the three options considered for these two Integrated Districts were:

(1) A continuation of the present boundaries with more shared services with the Roman Catholic District.

(2) Consolidation of Labrador East and Labrador West into one large district.

(3) An inter-denominational arrangement for the administration of all schools in Labrador East under one authority and those in Labrador West under another.

In this area of the Province, we feel the inter-denominational approach deserves careful study by both the Integrated and the Catholic Education Councils. If the two denominational groups were combined, a more viable unit could be maintained in Labrador West, approximately 3,800 students, and another in Labrador East, with about 3,300 students. We believe it is possible for the schools in each of these areas to be administered by one board without seriously affecting their denominational character or integrity. This could be done in any one of a number of ways. One possibility would be for one denomination to give full responsibility to the other for the operation of its schools, with certain terms and conditions designed to protect the denominational integrity of the instructional program. A more realistic possibility might be an arrangement whereby one board would have representatives from the other on both its membership and its professional staff. A more complex arrangement would be to have legislative provision made for the establishment of a fully "integrated" school board which would report to a joint management committee of both Education Councils.

In view of this, the Task Force feels that no changes should be made to the boundaries of the two Integrated Districts at the present time. Instead, it recommends:

THAT THE INTEGRATED EDUCATION COUNCIL CONSULT WITH THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COUNCIL WITH A VIEW TO WORKING OUT A CO-OPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY ALL THE INTEGRATED AND ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN LABRADOR EAST COULD BE ADMINISTERED BY ONE BOARD AND ALL THE SCHOOLS IN LABRADOR WEST BY ANOTHER.

If no mutually acceptable arrangement for inter-denominational co-operation materializes within the next three to five years, the two Integrated Districts should be consolidated into one as soon as the enrolment of either falls below 1,500.

BAY D'ESPOIR-HERMITAGE-FORTUNE BAY

This is a district of just under 2,000 students accommodated in 15 schools scattered along the South Coast between Francois and Rencontre East. In terms of enrolment, the District may be too small to support the provision of the kinds of services necessary in education today, except at a very high cost. At the same time, its distance from the nearest other Integrated district, about 140 miles, and the location of its schools, some accessible only by boat, make it difficult to consolidate.

This is another area where increased sharing of district services across denominational lines could work to the mutual benefit of different districts. We were pleased to witness a very co-operative working relationship between the Integrated Board and the Roman Catholic Board for Gander - Bonavista - Connaigre and some sharing at the present time. Even more sharing is possible in the future. Accordingly,

instead of suggesting any changes in the boundaries of the Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay District at the present time, the Task Force recommends:

THAT THE INTEGRATED EDUCATION COUNCIL CONSULT WITH THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COUNCIL WITH A VIEW TO ADOPTING A CO-OPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY ONE BOARD COULD ADMINISTER, ESPECIALLY FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES, ALL THE SCHOOLS IN THE AREA.

If this does not materialize, the Task Force feels the District should be consolidated with the Exploits Valley Integrated School District as soon as its enrolment falls below 1,500. If such consolidation were to take place, a regional office and local committees could be established in the Bay D'Espoir area, along the lines suggested for Burgeo and Ramea.

PORT AUX BASQUES

Port Aux Basques is a relatively compact district with a present enrolment of just under 2,700 students accommodated in 13 schools. It has a Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, and four Program Co-ordinators. The District office is about 130 miles from Corner Brook, with eight schools further away, three of them accessible only by boat. Because it is a distinct geographical area, with a marginal enrolment and remote from other Integrated districts, the Task Force considers it unwise to suggest any boundary changes at the present time. However, it is one of the areas which should be very closely examined in five or six years' time.

CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH

Although this District does not require special consideration under our Terms of Reference, we draw attention to it because of its proximity to St. John's. The two Board offices -- Conception Bay South and Avalon Consolidated -- are only about twelve miles apart, and the sociological reasons for setting up Conception Bay South in the first place may no longer exist.

On the other hand, the District has a student enrolment of 3,300 housed in seven schools. Its enrolment continues to increase. It has a staff complement of six Program Co-ordinators in addition to the Superintendent and two Assistant Superintendents. Our impression is that the District provides a high level of services to students and teachers. Consolidation with Avalon Consolidated at this time might not lead to significantly better educational results. However, from a purely economic standpoint, one could question the continuation of Conception Bay South with its own central office staff when rural sections of the Province desperately need more provincial resources.

After weighing both sides of the matter, the Task Force decided not to recommend any change in the boundaries of this District at the present time. It suggests that the area be looked at again in five or six years, after other, more urgent, district boundary problems have been resolved. At that time, various other options may be examined.

CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND

The Task Force received a proposal for the consolidation of all districts in Central Newfoundland and the Bay D'Espoir area into two large districts with offices at Grand Falls and Gander. This proposal was not thoroughly examined by all concerned. While the Task Force recognizes the potential advantages of

such a move, it does not believe that it should be undertaken at this time. Instead, the proposal should be considered when another review of school district boundaries is undertaken in the future, perhaps in five of six years' time.

AVALON NORTH

The Task Force received several submissions proposing changes in the boundaries of Avalon North. More specifically, there were suggestions that the District be subdivided into two, providing the Trinity South area with its own board. The current District has an enrolment of approximately 9,400 students, housed in 42 schools from communities in Conception, Trinity, and Placentia Bays.

After examining the range of educational programs and services available to students and teachers throughout the District, the Task Force rejected this proposal. The Avalon North School Board has employed a large number of specialists to provide educational leadership for teachers, has undertaken comprehensive long-range planning for the provision of modern school facilities, and committed itself to the provision of greater equality of educational opportunity throughout the District. The Board has also attempted to involve the public in educational decision-making that affects the education of their children. It plans to increase such involvement, particularly in areas such as Trinity South. As stated earlier, a student population of 10,000 is often considered necessary to justify the employment and full utilization of the broad range of educational and business services necessary in education today.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

At the beginning of Chapter III, we listed a number of key questions which served as a guide in preparing the recommendations of this Report. Directly, or indirectly, most of these questions have already been addressed. Another important question, dealing with the implementation process, will be considered in this final chapter. The question is: What strategies should be followed to facilitate the implementation of any decision to consolidate or reorganize school districts?

Whether the impact on school districts and their communities of consolidation is positive or negative depends largely on how the implementation process is handled. Consolidation is never easy. It is time-consuming, difficult, and expensive. At best, it can provide an opportunity to build a new school district from the ground up -- a district with better learning opportunities for students, better working conditions for teachers and administrators, and more community involvement. At worst, it can lead to divided communities that disagree over everything including the name of the new district and the location of the school board office, leaving citizens alienated from the schools for some time afterward.

In order for any consolidation process to succeed, a number of conditions must be present. Perhaps, most important is high level leadership by local school boards and their officials. Extra meetings will be necessary, public questions will have to be answered, and compromises made by all concerned. The process will also require strong encouragement and action from provincial authorities particularly the Integrated

Education Council and the Department of Education. A number of suggestions are made below outlining initiatives that should be taken by the various agencies involved in the implementation of the preceding recommendations of this Report.

INTEGRATED EDUCATION COUNCIL INITIATIVES

The Task Force suggests that the Integrated Education Council take the following initiatives in connection with this Report:

(1) Distribute the Report to all concerned so that they can engage in the widest possible debate and discussion of its findings and recommendations.

(2) Assign one of its staff members responsibility for organizing and monitoring the discussion of recommendations, for gathering additional information, and finally, for providing leadership in the implementation of whatever recommendations are ultimately adopted.

(3) Give special consideration to the legal issues involved in implementation in individual areas, particularly the procedures to be used in consolidation, the change in school board constitutions, and the consolidation of districts with varying policies and practices on unionization of non-educational personnel.

(4) Use both its own funds and, where necessary, negotiate additional provincial revenues to cover one-time start-up costs that may be incurred as a result of any consolidation or reorganization. Incentive grants would provide a newly consolidated district with an opportunity to get off to a fresh financial start and a period to establish its own financial base.

(5) Hold discussions with representatives of the following groups to consider the impact on persons they represent: the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Superintendents of Education, the Association of School Business Managers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and NAPE or CUPE as applicable.

(6) Initiate, immediately, high-level discussions with the Catholic Education Council and the Pentecostal Education Council concerning the inter-denominational recommendations made in this Report.

SCHOOL BOARD INITIATIVES

The Task Force suggests that school boards, particularly those directly affected by our recommendations, should:

(1) Consider the recommendations for consolidation and co-operation and communicate their views concerning these to the Integrated Education Council. The School Trustees' Association could be a very important vehicle for discussions.

(2) Where appropriate, initiate early meetings with affected districts to discuss recommendations and, if agreements are reached, to make preliminary plans for their implementation. Plans could be made for the drafting of new constitutions and the reorganization of district offices.

The Task Force recommends that school boards whose boundaries may be affected by the implementation of any of the recommendations made in this Report defer the appointment of permanent central office staff until decisions are made concerning such implementation.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INITIATIVES

There are a number of initiatives the Department of Education should take to encourage the consolidation of smaller districts. These include the following:

(1) Provide a commitment that for a period of up to three years, following any consolidation, there be no reduction in the number of Assistant Superintendents, Program Co-ordinators, and teachers who would be employed if the school districts remained separate. Any reduction after that period should be phased in over a number of years.

(2) Provide additional positions and funds to districts which operate schools in remote or isolated regions as proposed earlier. (These additional funds may be more necessary if no reorganization is undertaken.)

(3) Ensure that required changes in regulations and legislation, if necessary, are prepared in co-operation with the Integrated Education Council and approved as soon as possible to prevent any unnecessary delay in consolidation.

THE PROCESS OF CONSOLIDATION

There appears to be two different ways in which the consolidation of school districts can take place under the Schools Act. First, the constitution of one of the existing boards can be amended to accommodate the other district or districts involved in the process. Then the boards for those districts can be dissolved in accordance with Section 40 of the Act. This procedure would appear to be more appropriate in areas where one district is much larger than the others; for example, Bay of Islands, Burgeo, and Ramea.

The other procedure could be more complex. A completely new district could be created to replace the existing ones participating in consolidation. After the new board is established or about to be established, the older boards could be dissolved. This approach may be more appropriate in areas where two or more districts of about the same size are incorporated into one. It is the procedure which might best be followed in consolidating the Strait of Belle Isle and Vinland Districts.

When preparing a constitution, or revising existing ones, strong consideration should be given to the establishment of local committees for both political and administrative reasons. We have already made reference to this in several sections of our Report. The appointment of local committees, with all or most of the duties set out under Section 22 of the Act, may prove crucial in extended districts such as the ones proposed for Bay of Islands-St. George's, Burgeo, and Ramea, and for the northern part of the Island and southern Labrador.

DISPLACEMENT OF STAFF

School district reorganization should take place with as little adverse effect as possible on people employed by school boards. To a certain degree, collective agreements will look after this matter. The Task Force feels, however, that special provision should be made by the authorities to ensure that no present employee is deprived of a reasonable position in the reorganized district. There will obviously be a realignment of responsibilities for some people, but this is inevitable in a fluid and changing system.

TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Task Force suggests that steps be taken to implement the recommendations of this Report in accordance with the following time-frame and procedure:

SEPTEMBER, 1987

The consolidation of the Ramea and Burgeo Districts with Bay of Islands-St. George's. Representatives of the three Boards, under the direction of the Integrated Education Council, should amend the constitution of Bay of Islands-St. George's to permit this consolidation.

SEPTEMBER, 1988

The consolidation of the Districts of St. Barbe South and Deer Lake, and the consolidation of the Districts of Cape Freels and Terra Nova. In both instances, a completely new district could be established, but the Boards may find it simpler and more expedient to amend the constitutions of Deer Lake and Terra Nova. The administrative details should be worked out by representative committees working in each area.

SEPTEMBER, 1989

The consolidation of the Strait of Belle Isle and Vinland Districts. Here, we suggest that a committee of the two Boards be appointed later this year to plan for consolidation and to work out administrative details. A new constitution will have to be developed and approved. Moreover, it may be necessary to appoint the new board early in 1989 so that a new office can be established, staff appointed, and other arrangements made for the full assumption of responsibility on July 1, the beginning of the new school year.

SEPTEMBER, 1992

The Task Force also suggests that the following districts be the subject of further study not later than September, 1992:

(1) Labrador West
(2) Labrador East
(3) Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay
(4) Port Aux Basques
(5) Conception Bay South
(6) Green Bay
(7) Notre Dame
(8) Exploits Valley
(9) Terra Nova

REGIONAL SERVICES AND DISTRICT SHARING

In this Report, we have supported the concepts of regional services and district sharing. Even though these are not an alternative to further consolidation in most areas, they could spread the Province's limited resources much more widely. Regional services may be particularly helpful in areas served by school boards of different denominations, but sharing can take place in all areas.

The Task Force suggests that the Integrated Education Council encourage the Department of Education to consider the principle of comprehensive regional services to Integrated, Roman Catholic, and Pentecostal Assemblies school districts. These services could be provided by the Department itself, by participating boards, or by a combination of both. The Task Force also suggests that the Integrated Education Council seek the support of the other Denominational Councils in encouraging school boards to increase their efforts in sharing their resources or expertise and in co-operating, generally, to improve the standard of education in their jurisdictions.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this Chapter, a number of elements of any successful reorganization effort have been addressed. Certainly, there must be input from local authorities and citizens, and involvement by teachers, administrators, and other employees in the process. All groups must be willing to consider the various options in as objective a manner as possible. The importance of financial incentives to facilitate the reorganization process has also been stressed. But most important to the success of consolidation will be the strong and effective leadership of district Superintendents, their central office colleagues, and school boards themselves at the local level. Their vision will help ease the pain and reduce the emotion of change. Following consolidation, their leadership will largely determine the extent to which the potential of reorganization for improvement in student learning will be achieved. School district consolidation may at times be difficult, but it may also be exciting and challenging. It will be successful if it contributes to the development of the best possible education for the children we serve.

APPENDIX A

DISTRICTS VISITED

(1) Ramea
(2) Burgeo
(3) St. Barbe South
(4) Strait of Belle Isle
(5) Vinland
(6) Labrador East
(7) Labrador West
(8) Cape Freels
(9) Terra Nova
(10) Bay D'Espoir-Hermitage-Fortune Bay
(11) Bay of Islands-St. George's
(12) Avalon North
(13) Conception Bay South
(14) Deer Lake

APPENDIX B

BRIEFS AND LETTERS RECEIVED

BRIEFS

(1) Terra Nova Integrated School Board
(2) Green Bay Integrated School Board
(3) School Principals, Glovertown, Gambo, Eastport, and Dover School Systems
(4) Vinland Integrated School Board
(5) Trinity South Joint Mayors Association
(6) Superintendent, Notre Dame Integrated School Board

LETTERS

(1) Superintendent, Avalon Consolidated School Board
(2) Labrador West Integrated School Board
(3) Labrador East Integrated School Board
(4) Conception Bay South Integrated School Board
(5) Mr. J. Reid, M.H.A., Trinity South
(6) Rev. R. Moss, Badger's Quay
(7) Town Council of Badger's Quay-Valleyfield-Pool's Island
(8) Rural Development Association, Cape Freels
(9) Mr. Stanley Sparkes, Glovertown